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Education: Politics and Social Structure

Poromesh Acharya

This paper attempts to study the problems of popular education in an agrarian society. It examines the implications of the vast expansion of educational facilities in West Bengal in relation to particular social and political developments since independence. It highlights the structural and attitudinal roots of unequal participations of different strata of rural society in the existing programme of primary education. In conclusion, a search has been made for an alternative course of universal elementary education.

WEST BENGAL, one of the constituent states of India, is predominantly an agrarian state. It has an area of 88,752 sq kilometre and a population of 54 million. In West Bengal 73.51 per cent of the total population lives in rural areas. There are 38,074 habitational villages. The agrarian sector provides employment to 62 per cent of the total working population. After 37 years of independence universal primary education is still an unfinished business in West Bengal as it is in India. This is despite gigantic expansion of educational facilities during this period. The relation between political development, the differentiation in rural society and the growth of a segregative system of education in West Bengal after independence constitutes the focus of this paper. This may afford a better insight into the problems of development.

GROWTH OF EDUCATION SINCE INDEPENDENCE

In 1950-51, there was in West Bengal only one university, 90 colleges of general education, 19 for professional education, 1107 high schools, 1261 middle schools and 14,783 primary schools. The total number of students was nearly 2.1 million and total number of teachers was about 71 thousand. Expenditure on education in the year 1951-52 was only 9.3 per cent of the total expenditure in West Bengal during the year. [NCERT, 1961: 680; Government of West Bengal, 1959: 11].

In 1980-81, after 30 years, there were 8 universities, 281 colleges of general education, 45 for professional education, 5,067 high schools, 3,157 middle schools and about 50,000 primary schools in West Bengal [Government of West Bengal, 1981: Table 3]. Nearly 41 thousand primary schools are located in rural areas, while more than 8 thousand are in urban areas. It is believed that most of the villages in West Bengal have a primary school. Nearly 0.28 million teachers are there in West Bengal. The expenditure on education has also increased considerably. It is now about 30 per cent of the annual budget of the state. According to the Director of Public Instruction, Government of West Bengal [1981: Table 3.3], the total number of students stood at about 8.6 million in 1980-81. This, however, should not be taken at face value. These figures have been collected by head teachers from school records. It is well known that

school records are not properly kept by the head teachers, particularly in rural areas. The common practice is to inflate the number by fictitious enrolment. An error of 15 to 20 per cent may reasonably be assumed. In any case, there is no doubt that the number has increased considerably. More important is, however, the unequal enrolment and its structural and attitudinal roots. This may give us some insight into the implications of the growth of educational facilities.

A programme of universal education has three components, namely, universal facilities, universal enrolment and universal retention. Universal facilities may not ensure universal enrolment and universal enrolment may not guarantee universal retention. On the other hand, differential participation may render the growth of education instrumental in social differentiation. In that case education becomes an instrument of change but in a different direction.

DIFFERENTIAL PARTICIPATION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

According to Fourth All India Educational Survey [NCERT, 1982: Table 170] conducted in 1978, 70.86 per cent of children in the age-group 6-11 years in rural areas were enrolled. In a survey conducted the same year, in four villages of Bankura and Malda districts in West Bengal it was found that contrary to official claims, only 49.51 per cent of children in the age-group 6-11 were enrolled. Findings of this survey are rather revealing in regard to the differential participation of different strata of rural society in the existing programme of school education.¹

It has been found that there is a very close correlation between educational achievements in terms of literacy and enrolment and agrarian class structure. There is also a correlation between educational achievements and caste status and income level. In fact, the frequency distribution of families to agrarian class, caste and income level as has been found in the survey indicates a close relation if not perfect correlation between them. The literacy and enrolment rates decline very steeply in accordance with the hierarchical order of agrarian society.

At the primary level, 84.11 per cent of the total enrolled students belonged to the three upper strata of the agrarian society namely, jotedars, rich peasants, and middle peasants

who constituted only 52.24 per cent of total population. At the secondary level, 98.70 per cent of the total enrolled students belonged to the three upper strata. It is all the more interesting to note that 100 per cent of the children of the age-group 6-11 belonging to jotedar families were found to be enrolled in contrast to only 5.66 per cent of children of that age-group belonging to agricultural labourers. As for the other strata 84.34 per cent of the children of that age-group belonging to rich peasant families, 50.84 per cent from middle peasant families and 21.34 per cent from poor peasant families have been found to be enrolled. Not a single student in Class V came from either poor peasants or agricultural labourers. Only 5.26 per cent of the students in Class IV belonged to poor peasants and none to agricultural labourers. There is an abrupt break in enrolment in Class II for agricultural labourers while enrolment for poor peasants falls abruptly in Class III.

The two upper classes namely, jotedars and rich peasants, no doubt, fare far better in regard to enrolment and achievement than the two at the bottom, namely, poor peasant and agricultural labourers, all through the successive stages of education. It has also been found that 25.17 per cent of the total non-enrolled children of the age-group 6 to 16 are gainfully employed as child labour while 98.67 per cent of the child labour belong to three agrarian classes, agricultural labourers, poor peasants and lower middle peasants. Above all, the teachers and members of local school committees and local panchayats also generally belong to the top two agrarian classes [Acharya, 1981a].

It may be noted that agrarian class status has been determined in the survey by the nature of participation in the production process. Jotedars at the top of rural hierarchy do not take part physically in cultivation, but, unlike 'landlords as a pure rentier class', provide regular supervision over field labourers and bear all costs of cultivation including the costs of hired labour. Rich peasants are those who not only supervise but also participate manually in at least one of the major operations of crop production. In the rural hierarchy, they are in the second position next to jotedars. Middle peasants rely mainly on family labour for cultivating their holdings, but may also marginally employ outsiders. Poor peasants cannot subsist on the earnings from their small

holdings, but are obliged to work on other people's land. Agricultural labourers are even worse off, being entirely dependent on earnings from agricultural work on other people's land.

Findings of some other surveys also largely corroborate the findings of the above survey. In another survey conducted in three villages of Burdwan district during the summer of 1974, it was found that "school-age children from poor peasant and agricultural labour families constituted 18 and 23 per cent respectively of the total; yet only 10 per cent, equally divided between these classes, of the total school-going population came from their midst". It concluded, "the existing school system barely caters to the needs of the children from the economically weaker sections" [Chandra, 1983: 257].

According to yet another survey conducted by The Scheduled Castes and Tribes Welfare Department [1971;1972] of the state government in 44 villages of 7 districts in West Bengal, 79 per cent of the child population in the age group 6-10 and 88.7 per cent of them in the age group 11-17 belonging to scheduled caste and tribe families were non-enrolled. All these indicate the extent to which the existing educational facilities have been appropriated by the classes who stand higher in the social scale. This unequal participation contributed to the process of structural and cultural differentiation after independence.

STRUCTURAL DIFFERENTIATION: POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURE GAP

It is apparent that the upper strata of rural society in West Bengal has reaped almost all the benefits of the gigantic expansion of educational facilities. In fact, they have been benefited in more than one way. It is not only that their children were the sole beneficiaries but as teachers they pocketed the major part of the huge expenditure incurred by the state for the expansion of educational facilities. In West Bengal, there are now nearly 0.28 million teachers. They compose nearly 1.65 per cent of the total working population. The number of primary teachers has increased from 43 thousand in 1950-51 to 149 thousand in 1980-81. In rural areas this has strengthened the position of jotedars and rich peasants in the rural hierarchy. Educated members of these classes took to the teaching profession as a subsidiary occupation. They generally invest the cash earning from the subsidiary occupation in land for double cropping the high yielding variety and thus enhance their social and economic position. They do not, however, require to pay much attention to the subsidiary occupation once in service as their employment is secure.²

After independence a large number of colleges and universities were established by the government in mofussil areas to meet the growing demands of the rural neo-elites;

They are however, second grade institutions to train mainly teachers and other white-collar workers. Looking at the working of the programme of primary education one may even doubt whether the expansion of educational facilities was meant for educating children or for providing jobs as teachers to educated unemployed young men from the upper and middle strata of society. It is unfortunate that in the present system of education from above, these teachers and members of school committees who come from upper and middle strata are expected to fill the gap between the government and the masses below. It may be one reason for non-participation of labouring classes in the existing programme of universal primary education. It is obvious that they play a rather negative role in regard to the education of the children from lower strata. The lower strata in rural society generally maintain that these teachers, leaders of village institutions and government officials are either against or reticent about the education of the lower strata [Acharya, 1982a: 32].

The vast expansion of educational facilities has in fact helped sharpen the differentiation in rural society rather than reduce it. The resultant uncongenial social condition made the process of universal education all the more complicated. During the pre-independence period peasant politics centered round the issue of zamindari abolition. In fact, peasants in spite of differentiation among them, were more or less united against their common enemy, landlords or zamindars. The leadership was surely in the hands of big ryots and talukdars, without 'permanent rights on fixed rent' in land. After the abolition of zamindari system in 1950s a section of big ryots and talukdars rose to form the rural neo-elites.³ The so-called green revolution accelerated the process. It may be noted that the fruits of the green revolution are largely confined to the higher strata of the agrarian society [Swamy, 1983: 265]. The growth of tertiary sector, particularly the growth of education, helped the process further. Universal franchise also contributed to changing the political power structure of rural society. It is interesting to note that farmers grew in number in successive parliaments and composed the largest single group in the last four parliaments.

CULTURE GAP

The spread of English liberal education among the upper strata of the agrarian society has also widened the culture gap between classes. In the pre-independence period liberal education, however appropriate for the leisured class was limited to the urban gentry and a small coterie of rural elites, mainly the zamindars and some other privileged people of the higher castes. It is interesting to note that only 35.09 per cent of university and college students came from rural areas in 1950-51. The antipathy to

labour implicit in the liberal English education or pre-British Brahminical Sanskrit education was still to extend below the landlords and the privileged people of higher caste, who were numerically a very small group. Ryots, big or small, who composed of the bulk of the rural society, were cultivators and used to productive labour on land. The anti-labour culture of English liberal education had not spread as it now has.

It is interesting to note that even during 1920s and 1930s of the present century peasants, including big ryots, generally treated school education and indigenous education differently. A story narrated by Abul Monsur Ahmed, a literary and political figure of the recent past, may be revealing in this regard. Abul Monsur and his fellow students once requested a peasant who was ploughing a field to allow them to plough the field for a while. The ploughman refused to oblige as according to him educated people should not touch the plough. Abul Monsur belonged to a family of big ryots. He argued citing the example of his elderly relatives who were quite learned in Arabic and Persian but ploughed their own land. The peasant, however, was not convinced as according to him there was a difference between school goers and *maktab* goers. To him only school goers were educated [Ahmed: 55]. In fact, education and *babu* culture became synonymous after the introduction of English system of education in the nineteenth century.

It may be noted that colonial rule created a condition congenial for the growth of a new class known as *bhadraloks*. It is to cater to the needs of these *bhadraloks* that the modern system of education developed during the nineteenth century in Bengal. Modern Bengali language developed during nineteenth century as the language of *bhadraloks*. Modern language textbooks developed as a corollary to the new system of education and reflected the cultural world of *bhadraloks*. In the process indigent people who had participated in the indigenous vernacular system, were left out of the elementary system of education that took its place. Education became exclusively a *bhadralok* affair. In fact, the new education system of *bhadraloks* developed in relation to the destruction of the indigenous system of indigent people [Acharya, 1984, 23].

During colonial period there emerged a class of English educated people in Bengal. There was a sharp cleavage between the English educated few and the illiterate rest. After independence there developed a three tier system; few at the top with elite English schooling, a large group of neo-elites in the middle having education in ordinary Bengali schools and the vast majority of illiterate labouring people at the bottom. It is evident that a segregative system of education grew in accordance with the social differentiation

and political development since independence.

PERSPECTIVE OF THE PROBLEM

It is apparent that mere expansion of educational facilities and external incentives like free books or midday meals may not be sufficient for resolving the problems of popular education in an agrarian society. On the contrary, expansion of educational facilities may make the situation more complex for resolving the problems. Philip Foster [1971: 29] has rightly observed, "Quite obviously, formal education in so far as it is unevenly distributed contributes to the process of structural and cultural differentiation. But substantial problems arise if privileged groups 'capture' the educational system in such a manner as to use it as an instrument for maintaining existing status differentials."

It appears that in an agrarian society structural and attitudinal hindrances to popular education are much more important than others like so called 'cost factor' or 'standard of education'. The unequal participation of different strata in the existing programme of education in West Bengal and the close correlation between agrarian class structure and educational achievement as has been found in the survey of four villages in the state surely leads us to think in that direction. It may be noted that in that survey classification of rural society was made on the basis of work process and exploitation involved. It was reasonably assumed therefore that conflicts of interests of different agrarian strata were largely responsible for the differential responses to the existing education programme.

Attitudes of different strata of agrarian society may lead us to appreciate the problem better. It is interesting to note that only 19.70 per cent of the respondents in the four villages surveyed, covering all strata, opted for universal compulsory elementary education while 54.64 per cent expressed themselves against it. The class-wise break up of the respondents show that the overwhelming majority of the upper strata, namely, jotedars and rich peasants were against universal compulsory elementary education. It was also evident that the lower strata as well were not generally favourably inclined towards the introduction of universal and compulsory elementary education. There was, however, 14.86 per cent of ambivalent respondents in this regard. The two upper strata mentioned earlier generally did not show any such ambivalence while the lower strata suffered most in this regard.

ATTITUDES OF UPPER STRATA

The attitudes of the upper strata are very significant, particularly since 100 per cent of the children of the age-group 6-11 belonging to jotedar families and 84.31 per cent of them belonging to rich peasants were already enrolled. Compulsion or no compulsion, it

would make little difference in regard to the education of their children. Why then did they respond so overwhelmingly against compulsion?

The reasons are very simple. They were against compulsion because they feared that universal and compulsory enrolment would deprive them of the easy supply of child labour. In that case they would be forced to hire in adult people instead of child labour at a higher wage which would cause an increase in their cost of agricultural production. Besides, they feared that the labour relations would deteriorate if the labouring classes were educated. It was generally apprehended that the labouring classes would refuse to submit to the authority of the higher strata and would try to assert their rights and privileges once they got a little education. The upper strata in rural West Bengal are all for the traditional authority pattern and will resist any measure which in any way is likely to upset this.

It is all the more interesting to note that 90 per cent of the rich peasants, 80 per cent of the jotedars and 62.06 per cent of the upper middle peasants responded in the affirmative when asked whether universal and compulsory education would in any way cause inconvenience to them. It is noteworthy that 53.93 per cent of the total respondents belonging to higher strata opted for employing illiterate field labourers in preference to literate field labourers; only 22.47 per cent would prefer employing literate labourers; 46.06 per cent of them opined that the field labourer would feel shy to work as labourer if educated while 37.07 per cent considered that it would not happen so. A majority of 61.97 per cent of the respondents feared that the field labourers would demand higher wages if they received the rudiments of education. The most important question is, however, the question of labour relations. It is a very sensitive issue in villages. The upper strata usually refrain from discussing such issues with outsiders. It is significant that one-fourth of the respondents evaded the question in regard to labour relations; 38.20 per cent of them feared that labour relations would deteriorate if labouring classes received elementary education and 35.95 per cent did not subscribe to this view.

It can be safely concluded from the responses of the upper strata to different related questions that an overwhelming majority of them are against the education of lower strata. And the reasons as revealed are deep-rooted in the existing agrarian production relations. E E Biss [1921: 7] may not be wrong when he observes: one more unspoken objection to universal education is perhaps well answered in the words of Diderot: "There is no doubt but that it is more difficult to suppress a peasant who can read than any other man".

These structural hindrances to promoting the educational interests of the lower strata

as noted above may be termed as hindrances from above. Hindrances are there even from below, i.e., inbuilt hindrances from the lower classes themselves. It is interesting to note that Hodgson Prat, the Inspector of Schools, South Bengal, observed in 1857 that "The poorest classes, those who form the mass, do not want schools at all because they do not understand the use of education, because they are poor to pay schooling fees and subscriptions, and because the labour of their children is required to enable them to live. The middle and upper classes will make no sort of sacrifice for the establishment of any but English schools" [Stark, 1916: 78]. It appears that his observations are still valid.

ATTITUDES OF LOWER STRATA

We have already stated that the lower strata are also not generally favourably inclined towards introduction of universal and compulsory elementary education. Only 18.29 per cent and 16.88 per cent of the respondents belonging, respectively, to agricultural labourers and poor peasants favoured the introduction of universal compulsory education, while 43.90 per cent and 48.05 per cent, respectively, expressed themselves against it. It is to be noted that a large number of the respondents from the lower strata showed ambivalence in this regard. This is unlike the jotedars and rich peasants who more or less held clear cut stand. A majority of 65.55 per cent of the respondents belonging to the lower strata comprising agricultural labourers, poor peasants and lower middle peasants, considered that the introduction of compulsion would cause inconvenience to them.

As regards the reasons for non-enrolment of their children, most of the respondents tendered more than one ground. These are mainly, (a) poverty, (b) lack of interest in education, and (c) the necessity of their children working for the family. It is interesting that 41.11 per cent of the total respondents belonging to the lower strata, the largest number, expressed their lack of interest in education as one of the major reasons for not sending their children to school. In fact, 15 per cent of the respondents did not get their children enrolled simply because they were unwilling to educate them. Another 26.11 per cent indicated lack of interest in education to be one of the reasons for non-enrolment of their children.

The other major reason for non-enrolment is that their children require to work for the family. Of the total respondents belonging to the lower strata, 32.79 per cent offered this to be a reason among others for the non-enrolment of their children, while 10.55 per cent offered this to be the only reason. It is interesting to note that 19.44 per cent of the respondents stated poverty to be a reason for non-enrolment of their children but only 5 per cent stated poverty as being

the only reason for non-enrolment.

An examination of the responses as to what the non-enrolled children do during school hours, however, reveals that the largest number of the respondents stated that their non-enrolled children either help in household work or hire out their labour for a little extra income for the family. It is significant that 29.44 per cent of the total respondents from lower strata stated that their non-enrolled children were gainfully engaged. It is all the more interesting to note that except the 7.77 per cent of the total respondents belonging to the lower strata who stated that their non-enrolled children simply play away their time during school hours, the rest of the respondents in fact maintained that their non-enrolled children were required to work for the family.

It is evident that child labour and labour relations are the two main issues creating most of the problems in the way of popular education. In an agrarian society the employers are against universal education for fear of deterioration of labour relations and erosion of easy supply of child labour. On the other hand, the labouring classes suffer from internal contradiction between individual interest and class interest because of child labour. Some of the families are likely to be deprived of the earning of their children for universal education. But as a whole, the total income of the labouring classes is likely to go up as adult labour will be employed instead of child labour at a higher wage if child labour is withdrawn from the market. There are, however, other reasons for their reluctant attitude towards universal education. They are not sure of the benefits of education but apprehensive of their employers' wrath.

ALTERNATIVES IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

The crucial question for a programme of universal elementary education is how to motivate the labouring classes towards education. It follows from the above discussion as well that though the largest section of the lower strata could not be motivated towards education as yet it is not an impossible task either to motivate them. Basic education or the 'Nai Talim' of Gandhi may be said to be an answer to this question. In fact, 'Nai Talim' or 'education through profit yielding productive labour' is likely to resolve many of the problems peculiar to the agrarian society. It is likely to strengthen the bargaining power of the labouring class by resolving their internal contradiction. The loss of income of individual family as a result of sending the earning children to school may be largely compensated as the children will be earning while learning. Besides, the labour component of the system of education is likely to make it relevant to their life situation. The existing programme on the contrary is more suited to the leisured classes for its anti-labour culture components.

The programme of education as was formulated after independence, however, only aggravated the crisis instead of resolving it. If the creed of 'Nai Talim' or Basic Education of Gandhi were adopted as the only educational process by the framers of our Constitution for our country, the entire course would have taken a different turn. It would have been easier to adopt Basic Education as the only system at the elementary level and a common school system at the secondary level since differentiation among peasants was not as sharp as it is now. The political unity of different strata of agrarian society against the zamindars or landlords and their affinity to manual labour could have been the congenial condition for adopting such a course of education. It is unfortunate that the framers of our Constitution failed to uphold the cause of the labouring classes.

It may be noted that Basic Education was not acceptable to many political leaders. M A Jinnah rejected the scheme as Hindu communal. A K Fazlul Huq, the first Premier of undivided Bengal, considered it objectionable as according to him "the scheme would turn schools into factories or ashrams". Congress leaders were also not eager to give anything more than lip service. Nirmal Bose [1962: 204] lamented, "It is also interesting and significant that after Congress came into power, several expensive schools were established in different parts of the country. And these were modelled after the Public Schools of England . . . In other words, a grave blow to the new educational system of Gandhi was delivered from within than from without." The Central Advisory Board of Education, just before independence, accepted the Gandhian Concept of Basic Education "but without its acid test of self-sufficiency". Our Constitution mentions only "free and compulsory education and makes no reference of the type of education basic or non-basic" [Naik, 1966: 3,5]. In fact, the CAB killed the soul and our Constitution buried the body of Basic Education. Now there are few even to hold a lamp at the crumbling tombstone.

Education through profit yielding productive labour or Basic Education is still the only conceivable alternative course of education of the labouring classes, particularly, in an agrarian country like ours. But without solving the problem of instrumentality it is not possible to implement successfully such a programme. The course of development after independence has made the task much more difficult.

It appears that our primary system of education has reached a point where no piecemeal measure is likely to work. We should start afresh if we want any tangible result. It is unfortunate that instead of opting for Basic Education we depended more on piecemeal measures for solving the crisis of universal education. The recent attempts made by the West Bengal government to abolish English at the primary level and

withdraw the language text-book, "Sahaj Path" of Rabindranath Tagore, as the only text-book from primary schools may be cited as examples of such piecemeal measures. The failure of the West Bengal government to implement even such measures is only natural. The strong resentment expressed by the privileged classes particularly the urban middle class and the agitation organised by them against these steps of the government ultimately compelled the government to compromise and abandon its radical stance [Acharya, 1981(b); 1982(b)].

Political development in India since independence contributed largely to determining the course of educational growth. There developed a differential system of education to satisfy the needs and aspirations of different strata of our civil society. Nobody cared for the people at the bottom of the social hierarchy who are considered to be rejects of civil society. In fact, there has already developed a resistance syndrome. The upper and middle strata who have reaped all the benefits and almost captured the system of education, are likely to oppose either overtly or covertly any attempt to changing this differential system. As a result it can be fought only at the political level. It is at the political level that the problem of instrumentality can be resolved.

After 37 years of lopsided educational development, the only course open for an universal system of education is to rouse the labouring classes to demand and organise their own education. In fact, initiatives from below are the pre-condition for the successful implementation of any programme of popular education. The labouring classes must become aware of their invulnerable political strength as against their economic weakness. A programme of non-formal education guided by such an aim could be a viable strategy for releasing the initiative from below. It could be a programme for training educational workers from weaker sections of the rural community who in turn would organise programmes of political awareness of adults and literacy for children of the age-group 6 to 9. It may be noted that the children of the age below 9 are not generally employed as child labour.

A two-phase programme has been envisaged here. In the first phase the programme will aim at training educational workers from weaker sections of rural society and a take-off level of literacy for the children from weaker section. In the second phase universal elementary education through profit yielding productive labour will be the aim. A panchayat composed of people exclusively from weaker section will be entrusted with supervising the progress of the work. Unfortunately, the existing peasant organisations and panchayats are not only unwilling but incapable of taking up the challenging task in West Bengal. This is in spite of the declared policy of the West Bengal government for processing all rural developmental work through panchayats. An

alternative peasant leadership imbued with the partisan attitude of a crusader is the cry of the time.

Notes

- 1 This survey was conducted by the author in connection with a research project on 'Problems of Education of the Weaker Section of Rural Community' jointly sponsored by Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi, and Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta. In this paper I have extensively used the findings of the survey from the two cyclostyled reports of the project, namely, "Education and Agrarian Relations" And Structural and Attitudinal Hindrances to Popular Education".
- 2 In rural West Bengal, for example, a good number of primary teachers do not even come to school regularly. There is a practice among them in many areas called *pari lagano*, i.e., attending duty by rotation. In Punjab and some other states, it is said there is the practice of employing substitutes at a nominal pay by primary teachers and keep the margin without doing any work. This is something like subinfeudation in land as developed after the introduction of Permanent Settlement by Cornwallis. Umasankar Dikshit, Governor of West Bengal, in a convocation address at Jadavpur University stated, "Apart from lack of adequate infrastructural facilities in primary schools, there often was wide spread indiscipline, absenteeism, double employment and deputation of substitutes who shared a part of the regular teacher's salary" (*The Statesman*, January 1, 1985).
- 3 Talukdars were landholders in Bengal during the colonial period, who generally enjoyed permanent rights on land taken from a zamindar, usually as lessee, but not always on fixed rent. Ryots were generally cultivators enjoying only occupancy right on land as a subject to a zamindar. The rent payable to the landlords or zamindars could be enhanced by them on various grounds. Besides, there were various types of *abwabs* or illegal extortion from the ryots.

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Tri-Star Soya Products

TRI-STAR SOYA PRODUCTS, which made a public issue in January 1983, has proposed 14 per cent maiden dividend for the year ended July 1985. In the very first year of its commercial operations, the company has achieved capacity utilisation of 78 per cent and has recorded an impressive turnover of Rs 15.33 crore which includes export turnover of Rs 3.60 crore. The company has earned a gross profit of Rs 123 lakh. The results for the current year are expected to be even better, as both the soya processing plant and the refining capacity will be fully utilised. The expansion of soya processing capacity from 200 to 400 tonnes per day and corresponding refined oil capacity costing Rs 224 lakh would be completed by November 1985 and go into production by December 1985. This, according to M P Mansinghka, Chairman, should enable the company to step up its turnover to Rs 25 crore during current year and to Rs 40 crore next year and ensure dividend payment at 15 per cent.

The company has plans to invest about Rs 2.5 crore every year for the next three years to create facilities for the manufacture of value-added products such as food/pharmaceutical grade lecythene from waste and full fat/no fat soya flour and soya dal besides increasing the soya processing capacity from 400 tonnes to 500 tonnes with corresponding refining capacity next year. The company proposes to finance the proposed expansion, partly from internal accruals and partly from issue of debentures/equity. For manufacture of food/pharmaceutical grade lecythene, negotiations for foreign collaboration are at an advanced stage. The company is also considering a

proposal for the manufacture of soya food and soyamilk in collaboration with a reputed American producer. The company is holding export orders valued Rs 380 lakh for shipment by end December. With the growing demand for soya meal in the home as well as international markets, the company does not foresee any problem in marketing its product at remunerative price. The company has recently introduced refined soya oil in consumer packs under the trade mark "TRI-SOYA".

The company is raising Rs 3.64 crore through the issue of 2.60 lakh 15 per cent fully secured redeemable convertible debentures of Rs 140 each to meet the cost of expansion and to augment long-term resources of the company. Out of the total issue, 1.2 lakh debentures are reserved for preferential allotment to existing shareholders in the ratio of five debentures for every 50 shares held. Another 70,000 debentures are reserved for preferential allotment to non-resident Indians and the balance 70,000 debentures are being offered to Indian public. Out of the face value of each debenture, Rs 40 will be automatically converted into four equity shares of Rs 10 each at par six months after the date of allotment. The non-convertible portion of the debenture will carry an interest of 15 per cent per annum at six monthly rests. The investor has an option to choose either non-cumulative interest scheme or cumulative interest scheme. The issue for NRI's opened on October 5. For Indian public and equity shareholders is opening on October 16. The issue is jointly managed by Merchant Banking Division of P N Bank, Credit Capital Finance Corporation and H B Financial Consultants.